

**Amendments to the claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

**Listing of claims:**

1. (currently amended) A method for protecting Ethernet data packets transmitted over SDH/SONET traffic in a ring-like optical network formed by a number of nodes, ~~thesaid~~ method being performed at the SDH/SONET layer, and includes utilizing MS-SPRING/BLSR system for SDH/SONET traffic protection and, in case of detecting one or more network failures that result in at least one isolated node in the network, ~~comprises~~ said method comprising preventing initiation of a squelching algorithm of the MS-SPRING/BLSR system with respect to the SDH/SONET virtual containers carrying the data Ethernet packets, while ensuring that there is no standardized use of byte J1 in the network, with respect to the SDH/SONET virtual containers carrying the Ethernet packets.
2. (original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the nodes of the network are ADM (Add Drop Multiplexer) nodes.
3. (original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the virtual containers of the SDH/SONET traffic are AU-4/AU-3.
4. (original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein a standardized functionality of byte J1 is inactive in the network.

5. (original) The method according to Claim 1, comprising filling the J1 bytes of all the virtual containers carrying the Ethernet traffic by one and the same binary code word, thereby preventing the standardized use of the byte J1.

6. (original) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

- blocking initiation of said squelching algorithm also with respect to the virtual containers of the SDH/SONET traffic not carrying Ethernet packets, and
- ensuring standardized use of byte J1 for the virtual containers not carrying the Ethernet data traffic.

7. (currently amended) A system for protecting Ethernet data packets transmitted over SDH/SONET traffic in a communication ring-like network, ~~adapted to~~ comprising means for implementing the method according to Claim 1.

8. (currently amended) A software product stored on a computer readable medium for protecting Ethernet data packets transmitted over SDH/SONET traffic in a communication ring-like network composed of nodes and controlled by a network manager, ~~the software product being adapted for cooperating with MS-SPRING/BLSR system for the traffic protection, and being capable of~~ for blocking a squelching algorithm of the MS-SPRING/BLSR system with respect to the SDH/SONET traffic virtual containers

carrying the Ethernet data packets, whenever at least one isolated node is detected in the network.

9. (currently amended) The software product according to Claim 8, comprising a manager software means ~~operative to cooperate~~ for cooperating with the network manager, and a node software means ~~operative to cooperate~~ for cooperating with embedded software of the network nodes.

10. (currently amended) The software product according to Claim 9, wherein the manager software means ~~is operative to neutralize~~ neutralizes standardized functionality of byte J1 with respect to the virtual SDH/SONET containers carrying the Ethernet data packets.